



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

## FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

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## NOAA Fisheries Seeks Comments on Proposed Actions for Yellowtail Snapper and Shallow-Water Groupers in the South Atlantic

*Comment Period Ends June 24, 2013*

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on proposed actions in Regulatory Amendment 15 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Regulatory Amendment 15). The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on May 24, 2013 (78 FR 31511). Comments must be received on or before **June 24, 2013**.

### *Yellowtail Snapper*

The state of Florida completed a population assessment for yellowtail snapper in May 2012. The yellowtail snapper stock is neither overfished (too few fish in the population) nor undergoing overfishing (fish being removed too quickly). The assessment results suggest the yellowtail snapper catch levels could be increased without jeopardizing the health of the population.

This rule proposes regulations that would increase the total annual catch limit and optimum yield, commercial annual catch limit, recreational annual catch limit, and recreational annual catch target for yellowtail snapper. The total annual catch limit and optimum yield would increase from 2,173,875 to 3,037,500 pounds whole weight. The commercial annual catch limit would increase from 1,142,589 to 1,596,510 pounds whole weight. The recreational annual catch limit would increase from 1,031,286 to 1,440,990 pounds whole weight. And the recreational annual catch target would increase from 897,160 to 1,253,661 pounds whole weight.

### *Gag and Shallow-Water Groupers*

In 2009, fishery managers implemented a management measure that closes the commercial sector for gag and all other shallow-water groupers for the remainder of the fishing year when the gag annual catch limit is met or projected to be met. This proposed rule would modify this management measure so that only the commercial sector for gag would close when the gag commercial annual catch limit is met or projected to be met.

This measure was implemented to reduce bycatch of gag. However, new information suggests this measure is not as effective as previously thought, because gag are not closely associated in landings with all of the other shallow-water grouper species. Also, since the measure was put into place in 2009, fishery managers have implemented annual catch limits, and measures to prevent the annual catch limit from being exceeded, for all shallow-water grouper species.

This proposed rule would also reduce the gag commercial annual catch limit from 353,940 to 326,722 pounds gutted weight to account for projected gag discard mortality from commercial trips that target co-occurring species (i.e., red grouper and scamp) during a gag closure.

This proposed rule would not change other management measures for shallow-water groupers such as the annual January through April spawning season closure.

### **Request for Comments**

Comments on the proposed rule for Regulatory Amendment 15 must be received on or before June 24, 2013, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries.

**How to Submit Comments**

You may submit comments either electronically or through mail. Comments received through other means may not be considered.

**Electronic Submissions:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal.

- Go to:  
[www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0088](http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0088)
- Click on “Comment Now!”. Complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
- Attachments to electronic comments (up to 10 MB) will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

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All comments will be part of the public record, and generally posted for public viewing to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter, may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. Anonymous comments will be accepted.

More information, including Frequently Asked Questions for Regulatory Amendment 15, can be found online at:

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/SASnapperGrouperHomepage.htm>.